



# O.T.A.R.G. NEWSLETTER

(OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AFRICA REGIONAL GROUP)

APRIL 2016



## MEMBER COUNTRIES

Botswana  
Ethiopia  
Ghana  
Kenya  
Malawi  
Mauritius  
Namibia  
Nigeria  
Rwanda  
Seychelles  
Sierra Leone  
South Africa  
Tanzania  
Togo  
Uganda  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

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## Editorial

Greetings to the OTARG family and the Occupational Therapy community at large. It has been while since our last newsletter, but I do hope I find everyone in good health in 2016. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep O.T.A.R.G friends and family updated on the events happening in the Occupational therapy world at large and keeps the spirit of oneness alive across the miles.

The newsletter is a platform for each and every member of the O.T community especially in Africa to communicate with the rest of the family, letting us know what is happening in your various countries, as we move toward keeping the OTARG family together. Thus on behalf of the O.T.A.R.G committee, I encourage everyone to communicate more often, please do not hesitate to send in your articles for the newsletter.

The year 2015 has come and gone, but it came with a memorable 9<sup>th</sup> O.T.A.R.G Congress that was held in Uganda. The congress theme was 'Transforming health care in Africa: A move toward Occupation'. This is a move towards trying to expand Occupational therapy's influence in the African continent.

The Uganda Congress saw the election of new office bearers, therefore as the O.T.A.R.G family we would like to acknowledge and express our most sincere gratitude to the out-going committee for their hard work and tireless efforts to see through the O.T.A.R.G work. Many thanks to Sarah Matovu, Justis Ntitu, Patricia De Witt, Fasloen Adams, Vivyan Alers, Avril Mazorodze and Rosemary Crouch. We

would like to congratulate them for a successful term of office.

O.T.A.R.G through these congresses continues to plan for and evaluate the progress made in promoting and expanding Occupational therapy services in Africa. Occupational therapy training has commenced or is on the verge of commencement in more countries in Africa. The horizons are surely being expanded in Africa.

These Congresses of OTARG keep the whole organisation together and have assumed enormous importance for the region. The next congress will be held in 2017 in Ghana. It is my encouragement that we start saving for the congress that is if we had not already started saving.

As a continent we are also delighted to be hosting the next World Federation of Occupational Therapists (W.F.O.T) congress in South Africa (Cape town) in the year 2018.

In this newsletter you will find reports from the 9th OTARG Congress held in Uganda from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of September in 2015. We also give you some reports on the great strides being made in some countries in terms of the training of Occupational therapists and/ or the promotion of Occupational therapy as a profession in Africa as a whole.

We hope to receive more articles from countries across Africa telling us about the advancements being made in relation to Occupational Therapy growth and service delivery.

Tatenda John Maphosa

# THE 9<sup>TH</sup> O.T.A.R.G CONGRESS FEEDBACK

## Editor

The 9th O.T.A.R.G Congress has come and gone, but it would not have happened without the planning. Planning for the congress began in August 2013, soon after the the 8<sup>th</sup> congress held in Zimbabwe. Ekwan Francis the president of the Uganda Association of Occupational Therapy and his team took charge of the Congress organizing committee, with The O.T.A.R.G Committee led by Sarah Matovu at the heart of all the organization and planning. He managed to rally up the Occupational therapists and Occupational therapy students in Uganda to engage fully in organizing of the congress.

The students' participation in organizing the congress cannot be overlooked. Led by Victor Alochi, the students worked hard to see that the congress was a success.

The scientific committee called for abstracts, reviewed and approved those which were presented at the congress. They managed to come up with the theme for the congress, which was 'Transforming health care in Africa: A move toward Occupation', and they also came up with a concept for the congress logo. Many thanks goes to the members of the scientific committee together with the O.T.A.R.G Executive and Francis' team.

Fundraising for the congress and congress resources was done at various levels in various areas. Overseeing proceedings was the O.T.A.R.G Executive in collaboration with the fundraising committee. The sale of the OTARG book "Occupational Therapy: An African Perspective", generated funds for 2 bursaries for occupational therapists to attend the 2015 OTARG Congress. The two recipients were Peter Ndaa from Ghana and Tongai Chichaya from Zimbabwe. Jennifer Creek also offered another bursary in memory of her daughter Elsie.

Delegates who attended the congress managed to secure a comfortable stay with the assistance of the hospitality committee. This committee also assisted delegates who wanted to tour Uganda, visiting tourist resort areas, going for cruises, fishing, amongst other activities. Other delegates prolonged their stay in Uganda after the congress, so as to visit and tour the country.



Ekwan Francis the Congress Chairperson (left) with Tongai Chichaya the new O.T.A.R.G vice chairperson (centre) and Peter Ndaa the new O.T.A.R.G Chairperson (right)



A group Photograph of OTARG members attending the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress



The two recipients of the O.T.A.R.G bursaries, Peter Ndaa (left) and Tongai Chichaya (right)

## Key note Speeches

3 keynote speakers were selected, and the following keynotes were made:

- Samantha Shann, W.F.O.T Vice President Finance – Transforming Health Care in Africa: promoting a globally-connected profession
- Julius Kamwesiga, Occupational therapist, PhD Student – The innovative solutions to the glowing burden of Non-Communicable diseases
- Susanne Guidetti, PhD, Occupational Therapist – The Meaning of occupation and how to use it in occupational therapy

Samantha's keynote gave an oversight of what the World Federation of Occupational Therapists is, and what work it has done and is continuing to do since it was established in 1952. The federation has 59 member councils. The next W.F.O.T congress will be held in South Africa in 2018. Since establishment in 1996, O.T.A.R.G is W.F.O.T's key representative for occupational therapists and occupational therapy in Africa. She alluded to the growing number of Occupational therapists in Africa, although the number remains significantly less than would be adequate to fully provide services to all people living with a disability (physical or mental) and the vulnerable populations. More needs to be done to train more therapists and also employ the therapists after they complete their training in Africa, in accordance to the World Health Organization (W.H.O)'s guidelines. The keynote stressed an emphasis on teamwork, as she called on all the Occupational therapists and other stakeholders in the health sector to work together to provide quality services to the African population as a whole.

***If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'***

Susanne's keynote was insightful and really opened up the mind, for one to think of their occupational opportunities. Her presentation gave enlightenment on the role of Occupational therapist, based on experience and research. People engage in occupations that are meaningful to them on a daily basis. There are many influences (including culture, tradition, age, gender, time, illness, environment) to the type of occupations that people engage in and how they execute them. Humans are active beings from birth and even before conception (in the womb), it is therefore the role of the occupational therapist to ensure that the human continues to actively engage in occupation. The keynote sparked a great discussion amongst those in attendance as they sought to find the meaning of occupation and the role of occupational therapy. An example of occupational influence was given in the form of an individual with stroke, how it affects occupation and occupational participation, and how Occupational therapy can help enable occupation.

***'Everyday activities are often taken for granted when life flows on, but missing when they cannot be performed'***

Julius's keynote delivered on the role of Occupational therapy in managing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). He alluded to the fact that NCDs are the leading cause of death and disease burden worldwide in this day and age. His main focus was on Cardiovascular diseases (hypertensions, stroke, heart diseases), Diabetes mellitus, Cancer and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases. These being 'diseases of lifestyle', Occupational therapists therefore play an important role as they provide innovative solutions to curb these conditions and enhance quality of life. OTs are creative thinkers, health promoters who enable occupation through providing physical and psycho-social rehabilitation.

## **Election Of new Office Bearers**

Election for New office bearers were held at the 9<sup>th</sup> O.T.A.R.G Congress in accordance with the constitution of the Regional Association. The following executive officers were therefore elected to take office for a two year term running from 2015 – 2017:

Chairperson:

**Peter Ndaa (Mr)**  
**Ghana**

Vice Chairperson:

**Tongai F. Chichaya (Mr)**  
**Zimbabwe**

Secretary:

**Brenda Shuma (Mrs)**  
**Tanzania**

Treasurer:

**Rulaine Smith (Mrs)**  
**South Africa**

Website Manager:

**Emmanuel Kalanda (Mr)**  
**Uganda**

Newsletter Editor:

**Tatenda John Maphosa (Mr)**  
**Zimbabwe**

Student Representative:

**Victor Alochi (Mr)**  
**Uganda**



From left to right: Rulaine Smith (Treasurer), Emmanuel Kalanda (Website), Peter Ndaa (President), Samantha Shann (WFOT), Tongai Chichaya (Vice president), Alochi Victor (Student Representative), & Brenda Shuma (Secretary),

## **Special Resolution for opening a New Bank Account**

At the 9<sup>th</sup> OTARG conference held in Kampala, Uganda, it was approved that the OTARG Treasurer Mrs Rulaine Smith and Ms Fasloen Adams (outgoing Treasurer) be authorised to open a Nedbank Small Business Services Current Account in the name of the Occupational Therapy Africa Region Group (OTARG).

This was in line with an earlier agreed motion of principle that, the Treasurer investigates and open a bank account with the most competitive charges.

## **OTARG 2017 - GHANA**

At the 9<sup>th</sup> OTARG Conference it was agreed via election for Ghana to host the next conference in 2017. The 10<sup>TH</sup> O.T.A.R.G Congress is therefore slated for Accra, Ghana in 2017.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

With the new committee assuming duties immediately after the 9<sup>th</sup> congress, it was made clear that OTARG must not restrict its activities to the organization of biennial congresses. The new president referred to OTARG's constitution, Article 4 that clearly stated the mission statement and the aims and objectives of the association.

It is the aim of the new office to accordingly promote and develop occupational therapy in the Africa region under the auspices of WFOT.

To start with, the committee is to collate all member countries that are registered with OTARG. Secondly the organization is collating all institutions in the region that offer Occupational Therapy Training. Such training includes Post graduate level, graduate level and the diploma level. The committee is calling upon individual members and member countries to fully cooperate and support the new committee.

# MY O.T.A.R.G CONGRESS EXPERIENCE

Attending the 9<sup>th</sup> OTARG congress was a unique opportunity for me. I would like to express my gratitude to the OTARG Bursary Committee who saw it fit to award me the OTARG Bursary to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> OTARG congress in Kampala Uganda. It was a great honour indeed! In addition I would like to thank my employer the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, Namibia for financing the remainder of the costs associated with my attendance to the congress. This was mainly because I had already secured some funding from the OTARG Bursary Fund.

Two abstracts that I submitted for oral presentation at the congress were accepted. One was on the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA Fund) of Namibia Return to Work program where I currently work as a Rehabilitation Quality Specialist. In April 2014, the MVA Fund Namibia developed a return to work program which seeks to return all people injured in motor vehicle accidents back to their pre-injury jobs. The abstract highlighted the progress of the RTW program after one year of implementation and the important, non-displaceable roles of the occupational therapy profession within the program. Presenting at the congress was an opportunity to share the impact of occupational therapy in a return to work program within the African setting. Significant networking with OTs from different part of Africa was achieved.

My second abstract was on politics and occupational therapy in African settings. Even though I had a single time slot to make this presentation, some delegates requested me to present again for the benefit of those who had missed when I first presented. As a result I presented the abstract twice and the attendance in both presentations was impressive. The presentation highlighted the definition of politics as the process by which power and resources can be gained and the importance of networking and negotiating skills among OTs in order to address the broader determinants of health. Insights in this abstract came as a “side plate” from my current PhD studies on application of the occupational therapy practice framework in disability policy formulation.

At the congress I managed to interact with colleagues from different countries where OT training is being introduced. Their experiences are valuable to Namibia because Namibia is taking steps to train OTs locally as there is no OT school currently. I believe the networks created at the 9<sup>th</sup> OTARG congress will be of help towards the development of OT training in Namibia.

In conclusion attending the congress created an opportunity for me to be elected as the Vice-President of OTARG within the new executive committee. I am confident that this gives me an opportunity to serve the profession within Africa to the best of my ability. It remains my encouragement to the readers of this article to purchase/market the OTARG book: “Occupational Therapy: An African Perspective”, the proceeds will go towards funding more and more OTs to attend future OTARG congresses. Lastly, I learnt to appreciate bananas (matoke) in different forms i.e. baked, fried, roasted and stewed in Uganda!

## **Tongai F. Chichaya**

### **O.T.A.R.G. Vice Chairperson**

Rehabilitation Quality Specialist MVA Fund Namibia,  
Bsc (Hons) OT (UZ), MPH (UNAM), PhD OT  
Candidate (UKZN)



Being a 3<sup>rd</sup> year student, attending OTARG Congress was a great privilege. My experience of the congress was an eye opener. In a week my mind was opened to looking at Occupational Therapy at a wider perspective concerning the profession itself, academic and professional opportunities offered, and connections with other OTs from around the world.

Participating in the week's events, more so presenting a paper gave me courage and passion for the profession. I was nervous before, but during the presentation I gained more confidence in knowing and believing that the therapists who were listening to what I was saying were my family and therefore offered me nothing more than support.

It's through this congress, as I interacted with other therapists did I realized what an OT is really capable of doing and also the challenges that therapists and we as OT students are facing, But nevertheless, most importantly how we can go about them.

I therefore encourage fellow students not to miss the next congress. This congress gave me the Love and Boldness for Occupational Therapy as a profession...

Having been elected the students' representative in the OTARG committee, I believe that if we work together we can get the best out of OT profession and also be able to benefit from the next congress in Ghana and the WFOT Congress in South Africa.



*Victor Alochi,  
O.T.A.R.G Student  
Representative*

## O.T.A.R.G in PICTURES



the new O.T.A.R.G Committee



from left to right: Tongai Chichaya the new vice chairperson, Sarah Matovu the former chairperson, Peter Ndaa the new chairperson



GROUP PHOTO





*Contact us:*

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START SAVING FOR

O.T.A.R.G GHANA 2017

&

W.F.O.T SOUTH AFRICA

TRANSFORMING HEALTH CARE IN  
AFRICA: A MOVE TOWARDS  
OCCUPATION